

---

---

# ***EDUCATION AND TRAINING***

---

---

## **DISAM Supports Security Assistance Organization's Automation Needs**

**By**

**W. David Carey,  
Defense Institute of Security Assistance Management (DISAM)**

In the early 1990s DISAM chose to take on the role of supporting the SAOs' automation needs. Our first task centered around the idea of automating the security assistance training management process. What grew out of that effort was the current Training Management System (TMS). Of course, a central network was needed to store the data required to operate the TMS system locally. Thus came the design, development and implementation of the Security Assistance Network, commonly called the SAN. Realizing that other processes could be and should be automated, the Security Assistance Automated Resource Management System (SAARMS) was developed which includes separate modules for budget execution, property management and budget preparation. With all of these automation tools it quickly became apparent that the SAOs needed faster and better equipment to access the SAN and to run the application programs that came with it. The next step for DISAM was to become the central procuring agent for security assistance personnel around the world. This led to negotiating a contract with a computer manufacturer to build, ship and maintain computers provided to our users. DISAM continues to support the application programs developed for the SAOs, manage the SAN, and purchase computers but stands ready to develop additional automation tools needed by the community. Finally DISAM is working with the Chief Information Officer (CIO) at DSCA and the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA) to resolve the issue whereby SAOs are no longer able to access restricted (Internet domain .mil) web sites.

### **Application Programs**

The DISAM programmers have been working feverishly over the last few months to convert all of the application programs to the latest and greatest version of the Access software. The project started early in 1999, first starting the conversion to Microsoft Access 97 but as would be expected from a team that strives for perfection, halfway through the process a decision was made to exert the extra effort needed to convert to Access 2000. By the way, it was not my decision but the decision of the programmers who strive to provide the best product for our users. You probably think that this would be easy but in reality it was not. Yes, there are conversion programs but the uniqueness of our programs made this a challenging task. Our goal was to present a product to the SAOs that incorporated their ideas to improve the package and win the war against the fear of Y2K. I am happy to say that the deadline was met, and the CDs are in distribution. To further insure that the user receives the most up-to-date software, the DISAM automation plan requires redistribution every six months. So be on the lookout for newest edition from the desks of the DISAM programming team.

---

## Security Assistance Network (SAN)

Back in 1990 we knew there was a need to automate many of the functions performed in security assistance offices but did not realize how important the SAN project would eventually become. There are now over 1100 users from 120 countries, including the United States, using the system. There are many actions going on behind the scenes that are transparent to our customers. Simply because of the design, IDA is able to make improvements overnight that all the users can enjoy without having to make software updates on their computers. As an example, one day you sign on to find out that the system is running faster. Unbeknownst to the user a new server was put in place. Likewise new options or Internet links are added for the benefit of all. We do our best to inform the community about these changes by using the banner page on the SAN. So, next time you sign on, don't click your way past the banner page. Take time to read and keep up with what is going on with the system that was built for you.

In addition, we will continue to support the annual unified command training program management reviews where update briefings will be given and automation training provided. Oh! By the way, how many of you remember the old DOS version of the SAN? You thought it was the best and just could not be replaced. I don't think you would feel that way now with the Internet version and its ease of use. We, as always, welcome your suggestions to improve the system. Keep those letters, messages, and e-mails coming.

## Buying Computers: How Does That Work?

Early in the fiscal year DISAM sends a request to each unified command requesting identification and prioritization of SAO computer needs by country. Since the funds made available by DSCA are limited, it is this process that assures equitable treatment for all. When the unified commands respond with the actual needs, a minimum of three quotes are obtained from computer manufacturers capable of, and willing to, provide shipment and support services as well as a sufficient level of warranty support in an international forum. As would be expected, DISAM prepares a detailed cost analysis each year to insure that our users get the best overall quality at the best price. In the past, one vendor has been the principal supplier of quality equipment at a competitive cost to our SAOs. However, each year's analysis stands on its own merits. If another vendor can possibly provide a better product at a competitive cost, the selection decision will be made accordingly. Following are a few of the features in the latest configuration:

- Pentium III MiniTower Base
- 500 MHz
- 128 MB RAM
- 20.4 GB hard drive
- Quote includes shipping and three year on-site maintenance

Once the vendor is selected and a price determined for each machine that includes hardware, software, and maintenance, a grand total is calculated. At this point the grand total is compared to the funds available, and orders are placed based on the unified commands' priority lists. Shipment to the users can be direct or the items can be shipped to the unified command for further distribution. It is extremely important that the shipping addresses be accurate. In some cases, the State Department pouch must be used. In either instance, the computer manufacturer is given the shipping address provided in the response from the unified command to DISAM. Our orders with

---

the vendor require them to notify us when the shipment is made so that we, in turn, can alert the country or unified command that the shipment is on its way. Our users can certainly be of help in this process by sending a message, e-mail, or by making a telephone call to DISAM when the equipment is received. Our service to our customer does not end at this point. Should you have any problems with the hardware or software DISAM is available to help. The automation team is identified by name and telephone number on the DISAM Web Site, <http://disam.osd.mil>, under the heading of technical support.

### **Other Automation Tools**

Many SAO or unified command personnel have demonstrated superior automation skills which have led them to develop their own application programs. This may be an Excel spread sheet or an Access program that helps with the daily tasks faced by the SAO. A good example of a program that fits this scenario is the SAARMS execution module. The software program was initially developed by the U.S. Central Command through a contract. Later this module was given to DISAM and modified to meet the needs of all SAOs in all unified commands. If there are other programs existing within the SAO or unified command, DISAM is prepared to evaluate their potential and to work with the initial developer to make the tool available to other members of the security assistance community.

### **What is Wrong With My .Mil Access?**

A series of memos starting in April 1999 issued by the Deputy Secretary of Defense, Dr. John J. Hamre, highlighted the fact that OSD's security practices were inadequate. In his first memo, Dr. Hamre noted that he would not task the services and defense agencies to tackle their network security problems without first leading the way in OSD. Following are a few of the network security actions taken on the OSDNIPRNET and SIPRNET:

1. All network e-mail and web access systems incorporated appropriate warning banners.
2. The CIO established a vulnerability analysis and assessment team.
3. All passwords meet DoD password guidance and are force-changed every 90 days, as a minimum.
4. The CIO has reviewed, and revised as necessary, OSD policies and procedures regarding the use and control of floppy disks and other portable magnetic and electronic media.
5. All remote access to OSD networks operate across encrypted virtual private network channels.

Certainly the tasking of the services and defense agencies followed shortly after the initial memo. A great deal of time and effort has been expended to protect government data systems, email, web sites, etc. With these safeguards came drawbacks for some of our users. Personnel using local Internet service providers such as AOL, ATT, or other services around the world found that they could no longer gain access to certain .mil sites. Having identified the problem, what can be done to help the SAOs get to those sites that provide data needed for their daily work? The CIO at DSCA, DISAM, and IDA have developed a plan of action and a solution that will be put

---

in place in the next couple of months to resolve this issue. The SAOs and unified commands will be notified by message and instructions will be posted to the Security Assistance Network.

### **Conclusion**

Automation has played a significant role in the support of the SAOs over the past ten years. DISAM and its team of professionals will continue look to the future and develop even better methods to help the community accomplish their daily tasks. We pledge our support, so send us a letter, a message, an e-mail or give us a call when you need our help.

### **About The Author**

Mr. W. David Carey has been affiliated with DISAM since October 1980 as an instructor, assistance professor, functional manager, course manager, associate professor and the Director of International Studies. He has a B.B.A. degree from Eastern Kentucky University and an M.A. in logistics management from Central Michigan University.